

Memorandum

TO: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager *MPM*
FROM: Jessica Bellah, Community Planner
DATE: December 10, 2015
RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for FBI Headquarters

Staff has performed a preliminary review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) headquarters consolidation. The DEIS evaluates potential or expected direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts associated with construction of a new FBI headquarters at either Greenbelt MD, Landover MD, or Springfield VA. For some areas, the DEIS incorporates planned or approved development which is not yet constructed and also considers no action scenarios that assume existing conditions continue.

The DEIS analyzes impacts on resources associated with land use, socioeconomics, traffic and transportation, infrastructure and community services, noise, air quality, natural resources, biological resources, cultural resources, safety, and environmental hazards. Impacts are evaluated in context of their intensity, type, duration, scale, and significance. Each resource is designated as having no measurable impact, an adverse impact, a major adverse impact, or a beneficial impact. Many impacts are evaluated in terms of worst-case scenarios and final plans may result in lesser impacts than those estimated in the DEIS.

In general, the FBI headquarters at Greenbelt Alternative scores well in the following areas:

- **Natural Resources -**
Overall long-term environmental benefits to surface water, hydrology, groundwater, vegetation, and aquatic species result in net-positive environmental conditions at the site. Redevelopment of the WMATA surface parking lot will result in a net gain of pervious surfaces and vegetative cover. Construction of a federal facility requires implementation of best practices in storm water management to a higher degree than any other form of development. Greenbelt is the only alternative that results in net-beneficial environmental impacts.
- Several other short-term and long-term impacts to land use, employment and income, taxes, public health and safety, and the pedestrian network associated with construction of the FBI facilities at Greenbelt have been identified as beneficial.

The following issues were identified as major adverse impacts:

- **Visual Resources –**
Any development at Greenbelt Station will alter the skyline from existing conditions. While tree line buffers will likely limit visual impacts on surrounding residential properties, the FBI headquarters would be highly visible from the Capital Beltway. Impact to visual resources is therefore considered significant and automatically categorized as a major adverse impact even if no mitigation is necessary.

- **Traffic Analysis –**
Several mitigation measures are recommended for all modes of transportation except the pedestrian network, bicycles, public transit, and truck access. Intersection improvements are recommended on Edmonston Road where it intersects with Sunnyside Avenue and Powder Mill Road. While considered major adverse impacts, these improvements will have overall beneficial impacts as they address adverse existing conditions. Traffic signal optimization, road widening near intersections, and lane geometry changes are also proposed as mitigation recommendations.
- **Public Transit – Bus Operations¹**
Delays to three bus routes on Edmonston Road are anticipated in addition to temporary delays associated with construction.
- **Washington Gas – Provision**
The DEIS is highly flawed in its assessment of the provision of natural gas. It proposes connecting under the Beltway to the nearest transmission line rather than the best suited line located at Greenbelt Road (MD 193). Although not identified in the study, Washington Gas confirms that the MD 193 line would best serve the site and staff believes that correction of the record will remove the provision of natural gas as a major adverse impact.

It should be noted that the DEIS does not identify a preferred site alternative. A preferred alternative would be identified in the Final EIS and be informed by the solicitation process.²

Staff Recommendation

It is recommended that Council direct staff to prepare a letter for Council's consideration providing comment on issues identified in the DEIS. Staff can further identify areas of general agreement and areas of concern as they relate to methodologies used to evaluate specific topics.

There are several factual inaccuracies or mistakes found in the DEIS relating to police response times and organizational structure, recreational facilities, and planned development in the area. Staff recommends the preparation of comments to correct this error be added as an attachment to Council's letter.

¹ No-build scenario also identifies impacts to bus operations associated with prior approved development separate from the FBI consolidation.

² The solicitation process consists of two Request for Proposal phases to the development community. Phase 1 was completed in December 2014 and Phase 2 is forthcoming.